



# **Four Wheel Driving Adventure Activity Standard (AAS) Guidelines for Dependent Groups**

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The information contained in this publication has been gathered through widespread industry consultation. All reasonable attempts have been made to ensure that it is accurate, relevant and current at the date of publication. Nevertheless, the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) are only advisory and general in nature and should not be relied upon to meet individual or specific requirements. They are recommendations for voluntary application to adventure activity providers and participants. They are not binding on any person or organisation and have no legal force.

The AAS will not cover each and every circumstance of an adventure activity. Nor can they, when adhered to, entirely eliminate the risk or possibility of loss or injury. Consequently they should be used as a guide only. Whenever using the information contained in this publication or any AAS, all adventure activity providers should carefully evaluate the specific requirements of the intended adventure activity and the persons participating in it. If necessary, advice should be obtained from a suitably experienced and qualified professional person.

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# Guidelines for organisations and leaders conducting four wheel driving for commercial and non-commercial dependent groups

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## **1 Introduction**

The Victorian Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) have been developed to assist organisations and leaders to plan and safely undertake outdoor adventure activities with dependent participants. The AAS should be used in the preparation of the organisation's risk management program.

Participants may already have a degree of skill and experience in the particular adventure activity and so be less dependent upon the leader for guidance and instruction. In these situations the AAS should be adapted to reflect the experience of group members and the particular circumstances of the adventure activity.

Regardless of the extent to which the AAS are adapted, each organisation, and leader has a duty of care to the participants to have completed a risk analysis of the activity and developed strategies to address possible risks.

The AAS have been prepared with the involvement of a wide cross-section of Victoria's outdoor industry, and reflect commonly accepted practices for planning and undertaking outdoor adventure activities with inexperienced and dependent participants.

### **1.1 Applying the Adventure Activity Standards**

The likelihood of injury and loss can be minimised by having suitable risk management programs in place and applying the advice provided in the AAS to suit the particular circumstances of the activity or organisation. Organisations may use the AAS to demonstrate that the delivery of an activity meets commonly accepted industry practices.

AAS are voluntary guidelines for undertaking adventure activities in a manner that:

- promotes safety for both participants and providers
- provides assistance for providers against legal liability claims and criminal penalties
- provides assistance in obtaining insurance cover.

While the AAS are NOT statutory standards imposed by law, some agencies/organisations may make application of the AAS mandatory (for example Crown land licences for trade or business insurers).

### **1.2 Legal aspects**

The ORC web site [www.outdoorsvic.org.au](http://www.outdoorsvic.org.au) has general additional information about:

- the basis of legal liability
- claims in contract
- claims in negligence
- defences against claims by participants
- Good Samaritans, volunteers, apologies
- limitation on claims for personal injury damages.

However all organisations should obtain their own legal advice.

### **1.3 Review of AAS**

The AAS are not fixed documents. They are reviewed periodically in the light of changing knowledge or practices. New equipment or technology, changing understanding of the environment, reports of incidents or near misses in Australia or overseas are possible triggers for a review of an AAS.

AAS are written specifically for formal groups (commercial and non-commercial organisations) undertaking organised activities and are intended to provide guidance towards satisfying the legal obligations inherent in delivering such activities. For this reason it is important to ensure that each leader or organisation interprets the AAS for the specific group, area or location and duration of each activity.

## **2 Activity description**

For the purpose of AAS, four wheel driving is considered to be vehicle touring and vehicle based camping using a four-wheel drive vehicle over difficult, remote or unsealed roads/tracks.

## **3 Planning**

In any adventure activity planning is essential in order to achieve objectives, have fun and to minimise the inherent risks to participants. There are many acceptable ways to plan an activity and AAS recognises that each group will approach this differently. This section is intended to provide a framework for planning activities to minimise the risks to participants.

### 3.1 Activity plan

An activity plan should be prepared for all activities. Each organisation must determine if the plan needs to be documented. The following is a list of factors that should be addressed prior to any activity:

#### People

- objectives of the activity (desired outcomes) and participant expectations
- duration of activity
- age, experience, fitness, skill level, disposition, and known medical conditions of participants
- size of group
- standard of care (education, commercial or community organisation)
- leader to participant ratio.

The leader(s) selected for the activity must have the required skills, experience and competency to conduct the activity, effectively manage incidents and satisfy the planned objectives.

At least one leader should be suitably familiar with the area being visited (the level of familiarity will vary according to the objectives and circumstances of the group.)

Leaders must have passed the Working With Children Check if independently supervising participants under 18 years of age (see [www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren) for requirements and exemptions).

#### Equipment

- group equipment including first aid and communication equipment
- personal equipment including clothing, food and dietary requirements, and personal medication
- availability of specific activity equipment for participants
- condition and suitability of all equipment
- support/evacuation resources (vehicle, local bus company, etc.) and availability and access of emergency medical assistance (e.g. air ambulance flight times, SES, etc.).

#### Physical Environment

- area and route selection and intended route
- availability and suitability of maps and other area specific information
- ability of site to withstand visitation with minimal impact
- terrain (route characteristics) and associated implications including remoteness and access
- land managers requirements (access restrictions, group sizes, permit requirements, booking requirements)
- seasonal factors (snow, fire, availability of drinking water, tides, river levels, track conditions, other users)
- expected weather conditions and implications (hypothermia, hyperthermia).

Route selection is the most important consideration when creating an activity plan. Organisations and leaders should select track sections that meet the objectives of the activity. To do this, consideration should be given to the following:

- track characteristics (technical difficulty and surrounding environment)
- characteristics of the area (alpine, desert, snow)
- suitability / availability of vehicles.

The leader and support personnel on a four-wheel drive activity/tour should:

- have four-wheel driving and recovery skills that are commensurate to the activity characteristics
- have the ability to instruct and assist participants and cope with an incident / emergency.

For the benefit of advising participants track classification is recommended as follows:

- **GREEN** - All Wheel Drive. High Range, Road tyres
- **BLUE** - Mainly High Range but Low Range required. Road tyres
- **BLACK** - Significant Low Range. Standard 4WD Ground Clearance. All Terrain Tyres. Should have 4WD Driver training
- **RED** - Low Range. High Ground Clearance. Mud Terrain Tyres. Winch/ Recovery Equipment. Experienced Driver.

#### Guidance Note

The activity plan should take into account the possible impact of severe weather on the safe conduct of the activity. The Guidance Note 'Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions' provides information and commonly agreed procedures for planning and responding to severe weather in the outdoors that involve led activities with dependent participants in Victoria. The Guidance Note is available from the ORC website [www.outdoorsvic.org.au](http://www.outdoorsvic.org.au)



## General

Factors that may cause an activity to be cancelled, modified or postponed include, but are not limited to, forecasted or current adverse weather conditions, insufficient equipment, restrictions dictated by the land manager and environmental factors (flood, drought, fire).

### 3.2 Pre-activity documentation

There are certain details that a leader and/or organisation must document to maximise safety.

The following information must be documented, taken on the activity and a copy must be made available to a non-participating contact:

- activity plan. (at least a route plan explaining from where to where, how long it should take and expected hazards)
- emergency strategy (refer Emergency Strategy)
- participant's names, address and emergency contact details
- any medical conditions of participants, including teachers and supervisors, that are likely to affect performance (for example asthma (details of management plan including medication), diabetes, epilepsy, fainting/dizziness, specific allergic reactions, blood conditions which may affect bleeding/ blood clotting, conditions affecting balance, recent or long-standing injuries (e.g. back, knee, ankle), disability or other relevant medical conditions (eg pregnancy, repetitive strain injury (RSI), heart and any relevant medication)
- throughout the activity the leader must take reasonable steps to manage any known specific participant medical requirements
- after a full explanation/briefing participants should be asked to sign an acknowledgement of the inherent risks involved in the specific activity
- the signature of a parent/guardian for participants under the age of 18 authorising participation.

### 3.3 Competencies

To lead activities a leader must be confident of having the skills and experience at least equivalent to that described by the following Units of Competency. A leader can acquire these skills and experience through training with community organisations such as clubs, via employers, TAFE colleges, universities, registered training organisations (RTO's), inhouse training and by attaining international qualifications.

The driver skills indicated below are generally included in (or equivalent to) most available accredited four-wheel drive training courses.

Details of these Units of Competency can be found at the National Training Information Service website at [www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au). NTIS is the official national register of information on Training Packages, Qualifications, Courses, Units of Competency and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). See also Service Skills Australia [www.servicesskills.com.au](http://www.servicesskills.com.au) These competencies are used to describe the skills required to undertake a specific role within the outdoor industry.

In non-commercial activities participants are often peers/club members with known experience/skills. Where this is the case, the leader may not require all of the skills listed below but may prefer to delegate some aspects to other members of the group. The group needs to assess the list of skills described below and ensure that the relevant skills are available within the group for the particular activity.

A statement of attainment for these units is not required but the inclusion of this section is intended to provide a suitable benchmark describing the skills that leaders should have, although not all of the skills listed below will be applicable on all activities. It is recommended that leaders keep a diary record of activities they participate in and/or are responsible for as relevant experience is also extremely important.

	GENERIC	UNIT CODE
These units relate to the generic competency expected of any individual in a position of Leadership or Management in the outdoors.	<b>Leadership and Management Skills</b>	
	Respond to emergency situations	SRXEMR001A
	<b>See the First aid section in this AAS</b>	
	Facilitate a group	SRXGRO001A
	Deal with conflict	SRXGRO002A
	Undertake risk analysis of activities	SRXRIK001A
	Apply sport & recreation law	SRXINU002A
	Follow defined Occupational Health and Safety policy and procedures	SRXOHS001B

	GENERIC	UNIT CODE
	Manage risk in an outdoor activity	SROODR006A
	Plan for minimal environmental impact	SROOPS002B
These additional skills may be required when the activity is more complex, conditions more variable, location is more remote, etc.	<b>Outdoor Recreation Skills</b>	
	Provide leadership to groups	SRXGRO003A
	Plan outdoor recreation activities (advanced)	SROODR003A
	Guide outdoor recreation sessions	SROODR005A
	Apply weather information	SROOPS003B
	Coordinate emergency response	SROEMR002A
	Operate communications systems and equipment	PUAOPE002A
	Navigate in tracked or easy untracked areas	SRONAV001B
	Navigate in difficult or trackless areas	SRONAV002B
	Use and maintain a temporary or overnight site	SROOPS006B
Apply search and rescue skills	SROOPS005B	

FOUR WHEEL DRIVING SKILLS		UNIT CODE
These areas of competence relate specifically to the expected competency of a guide on a four wheel driving activity. As a pre-requisite for any four-wheel driving in Victoria, any driver should possess a current driver's licence appropriate to the vehicle being driven.	Drive and recover a four-wheel drive vehicle	SRODRV001B
	Guide 4WD tours	SRODRV004A
	Drive a 4WD vehicle in difficult terrain using advanced technique	SRODRV002B
	Co-ordinate recovery of a 4WD vehicle using advanced techniques	SRODRV003B
	Carry out vehicle inspection	TDTB497B

### 3.4 First aid

To lead any activity a leader of a group (or a delegated other) must have a level of first aid training that is relevant to the situation. The factors that determine the level of first aid training and support include:

- the size of the group
- the age of the group
- the remoteness of the activity
- the ease with which the emergency services can be contacted; this may depend on the remoteness of the activity and the type of communication equipment available
- the likely time for emergency services to reach the injured person
- the nature and severity of likely injuries.

A common approach is given below. The time limits are guidelines only and the leader needs to make a judgement, based on the circumstances of each activity, about the level of first aid training required. The codes refer to the Health Training Package available from [www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)

**Urban:** This applies in parks and urban areas supported by a professional (not volunteer) ambulance service. Distance from road heads should be at no time more than 15 minutes.

No formal first aid qualification may be necessary but a leader should at least be able to care for someone who is unconscious or who is choking, treat for shock, manage severe bleeding and provide CPR. After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged that first aid training equivalent to HLTFA201A (Provide Basic Emergency Life Support) is necessary.

**Standard:** This applies to any situation where access to professional medical care is less than 1 hour.

It is recommended that leaders have a level of first aid training equivalent to HLTFA301B (Apply First Aid). After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged necessary to increase this to HLTFA402B (Apply Advanced First Aid).

**Remote:** This applies to any situation where access to professional medical care is greater than 1 hour.

It is recommended that leaders have a level of first aid training equivalent to HLTFA302A (Provide First Aid in Remote Situation). After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged necessary to include additional training to the level of HLTFA402B (Apply Advanced First Aid).

More information:

Ambulance Victoria ([www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/Main-home/First-Aid.html](http://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/Main-home/First-Aid.html))

Red Cross (Victoria) ([www.redcross.org.au/vic/](http://www.redcross.org.au/vic/))

Royal Life Saving (Victoria) ([www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/](http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/))

St Johns Ambulance (Victoria) ([www.sjaa.com.au/](http://www.sjaa.com.au/))

Wilderness Medicine Institute ([www.wmi.net.au/wmi/](http://www.wmi.net.au/wmi/))

On activities for participants with disabilities, for multi day activities and/or walks in remote areas, more specialised first aid knowledge may be required.

Other organisations such as clubs/community groups have a responsibility to manage likely incidents requiring first aid. Where such a group cannot ensure that one group member has adequate first aid ability then it is essential that participants understand this and, where possible, other measures are put in place to manage the risk of injury or illness.

### 3.5 Risk management

Risk is inherent in all outdoor activities and the AAS can help manage that risk. However it is not possible to eliminate all risk and the leader and organisation need to accept that some risk remains and they should ensure that it is managed according to recognised methods.

Risk management is a series of 'well-defined steps which, taken in sequence, support better decision making by contributing a greater insight into risks and their impacts' (Australian Standard AS/NZS 4360 Risk Management).

The five step approach is

Step 1: Identify all hazards

Step 2: Assess and prioritise the risks these hazards create, deal with highest priority risk first

Step 3: Decide on measures to control the risks (e.g. eliminate the risk, substitute a venue, use personal protective equipment)

Step 4: Implement appropriate control measures

Step 5: Monitor the control measures and review the process.

More detail about the steps involved in risk management can be obtained from the ORC web site or from a general web search.

The identification of risks could be considered under the headings of 'people', 'equipment' and 'environment'.

Examples of risks associated with 'people' could be the lack of necessary skills or inadequate fitness. Risks associated with 'equipment' could include inadequate clothing for the area, and insufficient or incorrect equipment. Risks associated with 'environment' could include adverse or unseasonal weather, sudden changes in river levels or high winds.

For the activity being undertaken and the group involved, foreseeable risks should be noted and strategies should be developed to avoid or minimise these risks. The strategies should be included in the activity plan.

Some activities and some organisations (such as clubs and commercial operators) may have established risk management guidelines which should be used.

### 3.6 Emergency strategy

An emergency strategy must be devised from the risk assessment to manage foreseeable incidents and minimise their escalation. This strategy should be documented.

Activity leader(s) and a non-participating contact must be aware of the emergency strategy and have a copy of it.

The emergency strategy for an activity must be specific to each activity and will contain:

- emergency access and emergency escape routes (where possible)
- assembly points where appropriate
- emergency contact details for key organisations (land manager and police) and how they are best contacted (mobile phone, satellite phone, radio)
- planned start and finish time of the activity
- the emergency trigger time for the non-participating contact to inform emergency services (on failure of group to return/check-in)
- specific communication being carried by group
- relevant aspects of the land manager's emergency strategy
- strategies adopted peculiar to specific areas being visited (e.g. the rock scramble or river crossings)
- a strategy for maintaining supervision ratios should any changes to the planned activity eventuate (adverse conditions, injured leader, participant(s) pull out of activity).

The activity leader must communicate with the relevant non-participating contact at designated time(s). If this does not happen, the non-participating contact must commence the agreed steps of the emergency strategy which would ultimately lead to the police being notified. There may be certain trigger times for various stages of the emergency strategy to be implemented.

A summary of the emergency strategy must be provided as a component of the pre-activity briefing.

Other factors include:

- refuge points and helipads where appropriate
- details of how communication with emergency services can be obtained, if and when necessary it is important to be aware of areas where normal communication equipment (mobile phones) will not operate, so the need for specialist equipment (Sat Phone HF radio) should be considered
- strategy if the external contact does not receive agreed communication

### **3.7 Restrictions to participation**

Participants may be excluded or removed from an activity (or an activity may be modified) at any time prior to departure at the leader's discretion. This may also be done during the activity if safe to do so.

Participants may be excluded for reasons that include (but are not limited to) being under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs which may affect performance), being unable or unwilling to follow instructions, lacking suitable equipment, having an inadequate level of fitness, physical ability and experience for the particular activity.

Operational restrictions to a four-wheel drive activity include weather, equipment, track condition vehicle condition and restrictions dictated by land manager and environmental factors (flood, drought, fire)

### **3.8 Pre-activity briefing**

It is essential that all information is accurately disseminated to potential participants in adequate time for an informed decision to be made about their participation.

Groups and organisations may have their own preference for how the pre-activity briefing will be delivered and the method may depend on the length and complexity of an activity. The briefing should be delivered in a way that ensures that all participants are aware of the following:

- identity and role of activity leader(s)
- an outline of the activity plan and objectives
- the nature of the activity and its inherent risks
- essential equipment and clothing
- correct use and/or fit of equipment
- recommendations on the type of food, the amount of food and water required and the availability of water
- strategies for conservation including protection of flora and fauna, rubbish removal and sanitation
- a summary of the emergency plan or sufficient information to allow participants to act appropriately in the event of an incident or emergency, including methods of emergency communication
- explanation of what is expected of participants and the participant's responsibility to act as requested (conduct etc.)
- restrictions to participation
- agreed methods of communication within the group (signals and calls) devised before the activity commences
- final check that all documentation is completed and submitted.

Leaders should receive acknowledgment that participants have understood the content of the briefing

Leaders must offer participant the opportunity to voice any concerns.

Other items include:

- convoy procedure
- confirm that all participants in control of a vehicle have the appropriate competence.

### **3.9 Ratios**

The ratio of participants to leaders is determined by a number of factors. In some circumstances the leader may judge that a smaller number of participants per leader/assistant leader is necessary. The leader should consider the supervision ratio based upon the:

- experience of the leader
- expected capabilities of participants (experience, competence, fitness, etc.)
- conditions (environment, remoteness, weather)

- land manager's requirements
- planned duration of the activity
- remoteness of the activity
- suitability and availability of equipment.

Land managers or relevant authorities may also suggest ratios that differ from AAS and where these are within AAS (fewer participants per leader) they must be regarded as minimum requirements.

### **3.10 Group size**

Group size is an essential component of group management. Maximum and minimum group size must be carefully decided based upon the following:

- the safety of the group and individuals
- the objectives of the activity
- specific restrictions imposed by the land manager (e.g Parks Victoria)
- expected environmental impact of the activity
- experience of the leader and participants
- the potential impact of other users
- conditions (environment, remoteness, weather)
- equipment available.

Where a large group is split into a number of smaller groups each resultant group must have its own leader and independently adhere to AAS.

For the safety of both the group and the environment, the maximum group size for a four-wheel drive activity is recommended at 10 vehicles. Any group of greater than 10 vehicles may be split and each resulting group should independently adhere to AAS before negotiating single track sections and/or fragile environments.

AAS recommend that no more than 30 participants are included on four-wheel drive activities. This is primarily an environmental issue so if a group of greater than 30 individuals is deemed to be reasonable, then extra consideration should be given to minimise the environmental impact of the group at rest areas, camping grounds and during any vehicle recoveries. Activity plans should account for these extra considerations.

## **4 Leader roles**

In the AAS leaders, assistant leaders and other roles are defined by skill levels, not by titles. The skill levels are described in the section on competencies. Some activities may refer to 'guide', 'supervisor', 'manager', 'whip' or 'instructor' because the terminology has been used in the activity for many years. The actual title of a person in a particular activity is irrelevant. Regardless of the terminology, there must be an individual who has the responsibility of 'leader' and is in charge of the conduct of the activity. There may also be other people (one or more) who are assistants to the leader.

### **4.1 Leader**

The leader of the activity will:

- have the skills and experience to carry out the activity plan
- be responsible for delegating tasks to assistant leader(s)
- be responsible for conducting the activity on-the-ground without external supervision
- have activity skills as well as group management skills.

### **4.2 Assistant leader**

The assistant leader of the activity will generally not be required to have the same skill level as the leader but will:

- have skills specific to the conduct of the activity
- be able to undertake activity-specific tasks delegated by the leader
- be able to manage the safety of the group, including in an emergency, if the leader is incapacitated.

An assistant leader would normally be included in the leader ratio.

A teacher without these skills may be responsible for the welfare and supervision of students but would not be considered an assistant leader nor included in the ratio.

A teacher with these skills may be an assistant leader and be included in the leader ratio.

There may be a number of assistant leaders with responsibility to the leader.

### **4.3 Other leader roles**

In some large organisations the leader may be appointed by an activity manager who:

- is responsible for selecting staff with the necessary skills and experience
- is responsible for appointing leaders and assistant leaders – in large groups there may be more than one leader for an activity
- is responsible for ensuring the activity plan is properly completed
- will not necessarily take part in the activity.

### **4.4 Specific responsibilities of the leader**

In addition to actual leading the group, the leader has a range of responsibilities for the duration of the activity including:

- take reasonable steps to ensure that the level of knowledge, ability, skill and equipment of each participant is adequate for the level of difficulty and complexity of the activity
- ensure that a process has been undertaken to research and plan for likely hazards, and that the leader is familiar with the measures required
- introduce themselves as leader and introduce any other key people
- ensure that minimal environmental impact message is conveyed and adhered to
- manage and minimise the impact to the environment that may be caused by the activity
- where considered necessary nominate an assistant leader (or assistant leaders) who has/have known skills and experience relevant to the activity and are willing to perform defined duties
- ensure a briefing is conducted and understood by all participants
- undertake headcount before, during and immediately following the activity
- maintain awareness of the physical and psychological condition of the group
- control the pace of the group
- delegate responsibility to other group members as necessary (whip, navigation, first aid, etc.)
- notify relevant people of safe completion of the activity
- ensure that any incidents are managed, reported and recorded
- manage the group to avoid or minimise the effects of hazards
- ensure land manager's requirements are followed
- confirm the activity plan
- ensure that the group has access to safe drinking water
- check suitability, condition and use of all group equipment prior to departure and on return
- ensure group equipment is secured and stored correctly at all times
- ensure to the best of their ability that group members do not get into situations beyond their capabilities
- check first aid kit equipment prior to activity
- check communication equipment prior to activity
- frequently check weather forecasts prior to the activity and, if possible and relevant, during the activity
- ensure all documentation has been completed and collated
- arrange for the signing of waivers where these apply.

Individual tasks may be delegated but the responsibility remains with the activity leader.

Participants are responsible for their own actions both in relation to obvious risks that may be encountered and also in following the directions/instruction of the leader on any activity.

- assess driving experience/capabilities within group are appropriate for the planned conditions and the activity to be undertaken.
- check that all vehicles and equipment are prepared and loaded in an appropriate manner for the activity.

### **4.5 Specific responsibilities of the assistant leaders**

If an assistant to the leader is appointed, they must be familiar with the requirements of the activity in order to be able to assume an effective assistant leader role including undertaking activity-specific tasks delegated by the leader, and being able to safely manage the group, including in an emergency, if the leader is incapacitated.

## **5 Equipment**

Equipment requirements vary with the objectives of the activity plan and the environmental conditions likely to be encountered. When planning equipment requirements for a four-wheel drive activity it is important to plan ahead as much as possible for all eventualities taking into account the appropriate access information and forecast weather conditions.

### **5.1 Group equipment**

The following equipment is the recommended requirement for any vehicle on a four-wheel driving activity and is the minimum considered reasonable to minimise the occurrence of, and appropriately deal with incidents encountered, maintenance and servicing that may be required during the journey.

Vehicles should be suitable for the planned conditions and those conditions that are reasonable to assume may occur during the activity.

Vehicles should be in a roadworthy condition and should be registered.

It is recommended that vehicle recovery points are mounted to the front and rear of each vehicle.

Each vehicle should carry minimum recovery gear appropriate for the activity:

- a dynamic recovery strap (snatch strap)
- two rated bow shackles (minimum 3.2 tonne rating)
- one axe or handsaw (pruning and or a bow)
- one shovel
- spare parts appropriate to the nature of the planned activity (duration, remoteness, track complexity)
- a tool kit suitable for the vehicle and the planned activity. (it is essential to note that the basic tool kit supplied with a vehicle may not be suitable in a remote location).

Each vehicle should carry the following:

- a fire extinguisher accessible to the driver
- sufficient fuel, oil and water for the activity and foreseeable delays/detours
- vehicle manual
- a tyre pressure gauge
- emergency supplies of food and water.

This does not represent an exhaustive list and equipment should be assessed for each activity. Driver training may be required to fully explain more complex equipment lists.

### **5.2 Participant's equipment**

The following equipment requirements apply to all participants:

- participants should have appropriate clothing for the duration and objectives of the activity
- food, water, medication and sleeping equipment
- emergency requirements.

### **5.3 Leader's equipment**

The activity leader has responsibility for the easy access to and correct use of:

- appropriate primary and emergency communication system for the group
- a first aid kit
- the primary navigation equipment.

### **5.4 Storage and maintenance**

All vehicles should be in good condition to be suitable for the activity and regularly serviced to ensure minimal environmental impact.

All equipment stored in or on the vehicles should be secured appropriately and all vehicles should be cleaned before and after each activity and between eco-sensitive areas.

## **6 Minimal impact**

The leader and organising body should be satisfied that participants are aware of their responsibilities as members of the group in respect to the environment and the community by following principles of minimal impact practices.

Parks Victoria has a 'Camping Code' to help you minimise your impact regardless of the type of camping or activity

you undertake. See it at [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process\\_details.cfm?note=19](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process_details.cfm?note=19)

The following recommendations draw on the principles of Leave No Trace Australia [www.Int.org.au](http://www.Int.org.au)

## 6.1 Travel and camping

- Stay on track.
- Stay on durable surfaces, which include established tracks, rock, gravel and dry grasses.
- Do not create new tracks.
- Always walk on the track even if wet and muddy, on narrow paths walk in single file as much as possible to avoid widening it (with the exception of *Phytophthora* areas where one should avoid mud).
- Do not disturb vegetation as this will encourage erosion and promote the spread of pest plant species.
- Avoid revegetation areas altogether.
- Find out about local vegetation to learn about those that are fragile and those that are resilient.
- Try to unload gear and take breaks on large flat rocks or other durable ground to avoid damaging vegetation.
- In natural areas spread out and walk carefully to avoid trampling.
- Avoid steep areas that are more prone to erosion once disturbed.
- Use established campsites. Take care not to create new ones. Otherwise camp on rock, sands, or gravel where impact is smallest. When these can't be found, then on areas with durable grasses or weeds.
- Actively manage the group at the site to minimise trampling and damage to the surrounding vegetation. (The leader might choose to educate the group and select tent sites for them.)
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- Avoid digging, landscaping and trenching around tents.
- When leaving a campsite, "naturalise it". Fluff up flattened grasses, brush away boot prints and replace any rocks that have been kicked or moved.
- Avoid damaging live shrubs, woody plants or branches.
- Protect water sources by camping at least 100 metres from rivers and billabongs.
- Keep the group size small.
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and tracks.
- Choose durable surfaces for tents and cooking areas.
- Avoid places where impacts are just starting to appear.
- Stay only one night.

## 6.2 Disposal of waste

- Pack and carry out all packaging rubbish and leftover food including organics in sturdy bags.
- Inspect the campsite and rest areas for rubbish and spilled food before leaving.
- Do not burn rubbish.
- Be careful not to drop rubbish while walking on tracks.
- When available, use established toilet facilities.
- In other situations, carry a trowel and deposit solid human waste in shallow holes dug in topsoil – usually 10-15 centimetres deep and at least 100 metres from water, camp and tracks. If toilet paper use is necessary, use it sparingly and bury it deeply or preferably, carry it out. Cover and disguise the hole when finished. (In water catchment areas, human waste should be carried out.)
- Urinate on bare ground away from vegetation, routes and tracks.
- Pack out all hygiene products in a suitable container.
- For personal washing or dishes, carry water 100 metres from streams and pools. Avoid using any soaps or detergents; if they must be used, use only small amounts of biodegradable soaps and detergents. Scatter strained dishwater.
- Hand sanitisers are a good alternative for personal hygiene.
- All campsites must be located at least 20 metres from any waterway.

## 6.3 Do not disturb

### Preserve Nature/Respect Culture

- It is illegal to excavate, disturb or remove archaeological, historical and cultural artefacts from any public or wilderness lands.
- Avoid bushwalking close to Indigenous sites out of respect for the culture and to ensure their longevity. Land managers can advise on these locations. Seek appropriate permission.
- Do not touch rock art, which can be damaged by the natural oils from human skin.
- Preserve the past: observe but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artefacts.
- Avoid bushwalking in areas where rare and vulnerable plants or animals are found. Land managers can advise you of these locations.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as they are.
- Do not build structures, furniture or dig trenches.

#### **Introduced Species**

- Avoid spreading non-native plant and animal species that are generally impossible to eradicate once they are introduced. Do not transport flowers, weeds, wood or aquatic plants into or out of the wilderness.
- Avoid spreading diseases like Giardia (a human bacterial parasite causing chronic diarrhoea) or Cryptosporidium (a single-celled organism that can cause gastro-intestinal illness with diarrhoea in humans) by properly disposing of human waste at least 100 metres from water.
- Know non-native species and report sightings of them to appropriate sources.
- Do not travel through Quarantine Areas.
- If a trip crosses areas known to contain pathogens (bacteria or viruses), visit the un-infected area first.
- Avoid transporting mud in boots, equipment and tyre treads which may contain Phytophthora (dieback fungal spores) by washing thoroughly before and after travelling. Use wash stations immediately where provided.
- Check clothing and all gear and burn or dispose of all hitchhiker type seeds before and after travelling in different areas.
- Help landowners and managers initiate control efforts by alerting them to infested areas.

## **6.4 Fire impact**

- Fires can cause devastating and lasting impacts to the bush.
- Check area regulations for fire bans. No fire (including a fuel stove) may be lit on a day of Total Fire Ban.
- Total Fire Bans may be implemented regionally so be sure to check daily and be aware of fire regions that cover the route.
- If a Total Fire Ban has been declared, consider cancelling your trip to the area for safety reasons.
- Leaders **MUST** know applicable fire regulations in advance of the trip, as fire regulations are the **LAW**.
- Contact your local fire authority or local land manager for details regarding your local responsibility.
- Preferably use a lightweight fuel stove for cooking and enjoy a candle or gas lantern for light. Consider using candles standing in sturdy clear plastic bags or containers for light instead of fire (non-drip church candles are recommended). Don't leave wax residue.
- Avoid lighting an open fire (even if permitted).
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires. Dismantle and naturalise any extra fire rings.
- Do not dig fire-pits.
- Judge the wind, weather, location and wood availability.
- Do not make a fire if fuel is scarce. Choose small dead pieces of wood that are found on the ground. Do not break off branches from trees or bushes.
- At least three metres around the fire must be clear of flammable vegetation.
- Keep fires to a minimum size necessary for cooking and minimise disturbance to the surrounding area.
- Manage your fire. Do not leave it unattended.
- Burn wood down to ash. Fires must be completely extinguished with water before leaving the campsite.
- Clean out campfires rings after use.
- Fires should not be used to create heat unless it is an emergency. Carry enough warm clothing so that fires for warmth are unnecessary.
- Be careful of improper cigarette butt disposal. Take butts with you.

## **6.5 Wildlife**

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Understand through education the role each species plays in each environment in order to realise the importance of its position within an ecosystem.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, and raising young. Touching nests or young animals may cause their parents to abandon them.
- Never feed wild animals or birds. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Store food and rubbish securely.
- Control pets at all times or better yet, leave them at home. All National Parks restrict pets so check regulations first.
- Report any injured animals to the local land managers. Do not attempt to handle the animal.

## **6.6 Consider others**

- Take the responsibility to ensure that your group behaves with respect for the hosts and other users. Set out reasons and expectations early in the trip.
- Learn about the cultural history of the land. Recognise, acknowledge and respect local knowledge.
- Respect the wishes and regulations of all hosts. (e.g. Indigenous, pastoral, land managers and locals).
- Never visit places where you have not obtained permission. Seek permission and/or a permit.
- Respect others' wilderness experience by examining the group's behaviours to minimise any negative impact.
- Make reasonable efforts to minimise the impact of the group on others.
- Assist other parties in difficulty provided that this action does not adversely affect the safety of your group.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Be diplomatic with other groups and other recreational users of the area.
- Be courteous. Give way to others on tracks and roads.
- Do not block paths or tracks with people or equipment. Have rest breaks in discreet places to minimise impact on other groups.
- If possible camp out of sight and sound of other visitors.
- Let everyone enjoy nature's sounds. Keep noise to a minimum. Talk quietly especially when in large groups.
- Avoid the use of bright lights, radios, electronic games, mobile phones and other intrusive urban devices.

## **6.7 Four wheel driving specific**

- Support four-wheel drive touring and vehicle based camping as a responsible and legitimate family recreational activity, enjoy your recreation and respect the rights of others.
- Obey the laws and regulations for recreational vehicles which apply to public land.
- Always utilise recognised vehicle tracks and where possible, rest locations. If this is not possible (around camping areas) access should occur only at locations with a robust surface on which the vehicles will have minimal impact.
- Always seek permission before driving on private land, never disturb livestock or watering points and leave gates as found.
- Tying to trees or other vegetation should always be avoided (camping, vehicle recovery). If this is not possible, tree trunk protectors' and extreme care should be taken to eliminate damage from rope movement.
- Track erosion should always be minimised and care should be taken when there is potential for excessive wear and tear (wet areas, steep climbs and descents and setting up recoveries).

## **7 Definition of terms**

In the AAS the following terms are used

### **Organisation or activity provider**

This is a commercial body (for profit) or non-commercial body (not-for-profit / community group) which undertakes to provide an activity.

### **Leader**

This is the person who has the responsibility for the conduct of the actual activity. The leader will have a level of skill appropriate to the activity and may be supported by one or more assistant leaders.

### **Assistant leader**

This person will be delegated tasks by the leader and will have a level of skill appropriate to those tasks.

### **Participants**

A person whose welfare is the responsibility of leader or assistant leader and/or who participates in an activity for

recreational or educational purposes but not in a leadership role.

### **Terminology**

Some activities have specific terminology for various roles e.g. 'trip leader'. In the AAS the roles are related to the skills, not a title.

Glossary of abbreviations.

AAS - Adventure Activity Standards

ORC - Outdoor Recreation Centre Inc. Victoria

NTIS - National Training Information Service

## **8 Further information**

Useful contacts for track and weather conditions are;

- The Parks Victoria Information Line Ph: 13 19 63.
- The Parks Victoria Website [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au).
- The Bureau of Meteorology Website [www.bom.gov.au/weather/vic/](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/vic/)
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment Ph: 13 61 86.
- The Department of Sustainability & Environment website [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au).
- Four Wheel Drive Victoria Ph: 03 9857 5209.
- Four Wheel Drive Victoria Website [www.fwdvictoria.org.au](http://www.fwdvictoria.org.au)
- Contacting the local pub, post office or store in the area you are going to.

Land managers such as Parks Victoria [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) and Department of Sustainability and Environment [www.dse.vic.gov.au/](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/) will also have important safety and environmental information that will be important for the planning and conduct of activities.

The Outdoor Recreation Centre Victoria Inc would like to extend sincere thanks to the members of the working party who invested their own time and expertise to represent their respective organisations in support of this document (details can be obtained from the Outdoor Recreation Centre Inc.)

Version 3.1 – changes made to Section 3.1 Activity plan

Grouping of items and reference to Guidance Note 'Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions'